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SUBJECT: AUSTRIA'S NEW CABINET: INTERIOR MINISTER FEKTER

[¶1.](#) (U) The following is a profile of Maria Fekter, of the conservative People's Party (OVP), who has been named Interior Minister in the new GOA cabinet.

#### Experience

[¶2.](#) (U) Fekter is a hold-over from the previous SPO-OVP cabinet, which she joined only a few months before its demise. She was born February 1, 1956, in Attnang-Puchheim in Upper Austria. Fekter attended a Catholic boarding school for girls and subsequently a commercial senior high school in her home province. She earned a doctorate in law in 1979 and an MBA in 1982, both from the University of Linz. Fekter also holds a business license. She joined her parents' cement company in 1982 and became managing director in 1987.

[¶3.](#) (U) Fekter began her political career as an OVP deputy in the municipality of Attnang-Puchheim from 1986 to 1990. From 1990 to 2002 she served on the board of the Austrian Economic Federation - the business wing of the OVP. From 1990 to 1994 Fekter served as State Secretary in the Economics Ministry. Subsequently, she became an OVP MP in the national parliament, where she acted as justice spokeswoman for her party. Since 2002 Fekter has also chaired the Economic Commission of the European Women's Federation. From July 2007 to June 2008 Fekter served as Federal Ombudswoman. In July 2008 she was sworn in as Interior Minister, and was re-appointed to the post in the new SPO-OVP coalition government that took office in December 2008. Fekter was elected one of four party deputies to OVP Chairman Josef Proell at the OVP convention on November 28, 2008.

#### Political Views

[¶4.](#) (U) Fekter is known to be a sharp-tongued expert on justice issues who holds hardline, conservative positions on both social and law-and-order policies. She has advocated swift deportation of illegal aliens and asylum applicants with criminal records, and has consistently opposed the legalization of homosexual partnerships. From 2006 to mid-2007, Fekter headed the OVP's team in the investigative committee on the purchase of Eurofighter interceptors for the Austrian armed forces, where she proved to be an intense, extremely well-prepared advocate of the purchase.

[¶5.](#) (U) Fekter has also announced her intention to set more restrictive requirements for prospective immigrants to Austria, such as German language skills. Fekter has repeatedly urged more legal tools for Austrian law enforcement and intelligent agencies in the fight against terrorism and organized crime.

#### Family

[¶6.](#) (U) Fekter is married and has an adult daughter.

#### Comment: Integration Will Pose a Challenge

[¶7.](#) (U) Fekter will lead a police force that has been profoundly shaken in recent months by revelations of bribery and public backstabbing among senior officials. She will also be charged with developing strategies to improve the process of integration for second and third generation migrants into Austrian society. Opposition parties and NGOs have already criticized the new government for assigning integration policy to the Interior Ministry instead of creating a separate agency. They will be quick to blame her for any perceived failures on the integration front. As one element of her strategy, Fekter has pledged to recruit more officers with a migration background into the police corps. GIRARD-DICARLO